



Department of Conservation & Recreation

CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

## NATURAL HERITAGE INFORMATION SERVICES

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage (DCR) is responsible for the identification, protection, and stewardship of Virginia's natural heritage resources. **Natural heritage resources are defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, rare or state significant natural communities or geologic sites, and similar features of scientific interest.** DCR maintains a data system that is the most comprehensive and up-to-date repository of natural heritage resource information available. Information on potential impacts to natural heritage resources is crucial to a comprehensive environmental assessment of proposed developments or activities. DCR is committed to providing its clients - including public agencies and private institutions and individuals - the best available natural heritage resource data consistent with protection and security of these resources.

Most natural areas in Virginia have not been thoroughly surveyed, and new occurrences of plant and animal species continue to be discovered. For this reason, DCR's response or data cannot be considered a definitive statement on the presence, absence or condition of biological elements on a particular site. Heritage reports summarize the existing information known to DCR at the time of the request and should not be substituted for on-site surveys required for environmental assessments.

### Available Services

**Project Review.** Assesses the potential impacts of a specified project on natural heritage resources. DCR research will identify all documented occurrences of natural heritage resources from the project area (including an appropriate buffer based on the scope of the project), and may also identify potential species occurrences. If potential impacts are identified, the response will list key natural heritage resources with scientific and common names, Natural Heritage Program rarity ranks, federal and state protected status information, with recommendations for resource protection.

**\$60/site; if natural heritage resources are identified, an additional charge will be assessed of \$35 for 1-5 occurrences and \$60 for 6 or more occurrences. Separate sites are considered separate requests even if submitted under the same cover letter.**

Data requests are usually filled within 30 working days of receipt. Priority responses can usually be completed within 3 working days.

**Priority Service Charge:** \$200 surcharge.

**Natural Heritage Resource Occurrence Reports.** Almost 10,000 occurrences of over 1600 natural heritage resource elements are documented in Virginia. A [searchable database](#) on the Internet allows users to identify what kinds of resources occur in specific counties, watersheds, or regions of the state; a variety of geographic and taxonomic criteria are available to customize your search. Information about specific natural heritage resources include scientific and common names, rarity ranks, and federal and state protected status information. Also available on DCR's website are lists of plants, animals, and communities that are ranked as rare by the Natural Heritage Program.

**Custom searches can also be provided by DCR staff at a cost of \$60/hour;  
Rare Plant and Rare Animal lists are provided free of charge.**

**Custom Distribution Maps.** Custom maps for any area of interest can be produced with ArcView. **Call to negotiate specifics. Charge: \$60/hour.**

**Priority On-site Surveys.** DCR biologists may be available to perform site-specific surveys for natural heritage resources. **Please contact the Natural Heritage Program Inventory Manager at (804) 371-6206 for more information, including costs.**

**Technical Assistance.** DCR biologists may be available to provide technical advice and assistance to landowners and managers for the conservation and stewardship of natural heritage resources. **Contact the Natural Heritage Stewardship Manager at (804) 371-6204 for more information, including costs.**

**Conservation Sites.** In order to protect sensitive natural heritage resources, precise locations are not released in the products identified below. Conservation sites are tools for representing key areas of the landscape that warrant further review for possible conservation action because of the natural heritage resources and habitat they support. Conservation site areas are polygons built around one or more rare plant, animal, natural community or geologic features, designed to include the element and, where possible, its associated habitat and buffer or other adjacent land thought necessary for the element's conservation. Conservation Sites are given biodiversity significance ranks based on the rarity, quality, and number of element occurrences they contain. Conservation sites should act as caution flags to identify potentially sensitive areas during planning efforts. Center points should not be interpreted as precise natural heritage resource locations, nor should sites be considered buffer zones for natural heritage resources contained within them. **DCR assesses a charge to all clients for map and digital products and services to help defray the costs of providing them.**

**Digital Natural Heritage Conservation Sites Data.** Conservation sites in digital format can be very useful when incorporated into a geographic information system (GIS) with other spatial information for display and analysis. DCR can provide locations of natural heritage resource conservation sites digitally for comprehensive planning, to assist with planning for a specific project or as a general screening tool for identifying potential problems. The expectation is that more specific projects and data needs will be referred back to the Division of Natural Heritage. In order to ensure appropriate conservation of the resources we are charged to protect and

encourage full access to DCR's interpretive resources, **DCR will provide digital natural heritage resource conservation sites data by subscription only.**

**License for Use of Digital Conservation Sites Data.** All use of digital conservation sites data provided by DCR, whether by public agencies or private parties, is governed by the [DCR-DNH License for Use of Digital NHR Data](#), which dictates conditions for use, requires periodic update, and proscribes distribution of data to third parties. The DCR *License* must be signed before any use of natural heritage data in digital form, whether those data were provided digitally directly by DCR or transformed by the client into digital form from paper reports, tables, or maps provided by DCR.

### **Conservation Sites Information Services**

**County Conservation Sites Maps.** A full color, 11 X 17" ArcView map depicting the conservation sites within a county. Each site is color-coded to indicate its biodiversity significance rank. **Charge: \$20/county.**

**DCR Digital Data Conservation Sites Subscription Service.** This service offers the following features:

- **digital natural heritage data for a specified study area**, including conservation sites with site name, biodiversity ranking and acreage.
- **routine data updates, provided quarterly;**

- **Annual Charge:**

<b>for limited areas (county-sized or less, or involving 12 or fewer USGS 7.5 minute quadrangles)</b>	<b>\$1000/year</b>
<b>for regional areas (involving 13-100 quadrangles)</b>	<b>\$3000/year</b>
<b>for statewide cover</b>	<b>\$6000/year</b>

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